



Woodstock Public Library Policy

Policy Name: Disconnect From Work

Category: Personnel

Version: March 24, 2022

POLICY STATEMENT AND RATIONALE

The Woodstock Public Library Board considers the health and wellbeing of its employees as of utmost importance. As such the Board encourages and supports staff in prioritizing their own wellbeing. Disconnecting from work is vital for a person's wellbeing as well as sustaining a good work-life balance.

SCOPE

This policy shall apply to all employees of the Woodstock Public Library.

DEFINITIONS

"Chief Executive Officer (CEO)" means the individual occupying the office of Chief Executive Officer of The Woodstock Public Library, also referred to herein as CEO, or such successor.

"Disconnecting from work" means not engaging in work-related communications, including emails, telephone calls, video calls or the sending or reviewing of other messages, so as to be free from the performance of work.

"Employee" means a person who works for the City of Woodstock Public Library.

"Library" means The Woodstock Public Library, located at 445 Hunter Street, Woodstock, Ontario, Canada.

"Library Board" means the Woodstock Public Library Board.

POLICY, PROCEDURE AND IMPLEMENTATION

1.0 Authority

- 1.1 This policy is in accordance with the *Ontario Employment Standards Act, 2000, c. 41, Part VII.0.1, Sections 21.1.1 & 21.1.2.*

2.0 Responsibility

- 2.1 The Library CEO is responsible for implementing the appropriate procedures in accordance with this policy.
- 2.2 A copy of this policy must be given to all employees within 30 days of any changes being made.
- 2.3 A copy of this policy must be given to all new employees within 30 days of being hired.
- 2.4 Employees are responsible for ensuring that they have read and understand this policy as it relates to their own work, and that of other employees.

3.0 Guiding Principles

- 3.1 An employee's time outside of scheduled working hours is meant for employees to recharge and spend time as they wish, and should not be used to complete work-related tasks; however, there may be a lack of separation between home and work that makes it difficult for some employees to truly disconnect. Because work is more accessible, employees may end up continuing to work even after their workday is done. Using personal time to work can make an employee feel as though they are "always on" or obligated to continue working or respond to communications.
- 3.2 Employees who do not fully disconnect from their work at the end of the day may experience stress and other mental health issues. Stress and poor mental health are associated with many of the leading causes of disease and disability, can lead to burnout, negatively affect performance, mood and attendance, and personal and professional relationships.
- 3.3 The Board is committed to increasing overall employee health and wellness and providing employees with a better work-life balance.

4.0 Application

- 4.1 Disconnect from Work (DFW)
 - 4.1.1 Disconnecting from work means that employees:

- a) Can and should stop performing their job duties and work-related tasks when they are not expected to work.
- b) Are not required to take work home with them to complete outside of regularly scheduled hours of work.
- c) Are not expected or required to respond to work-related communications outside their regular working hours, while on break, or during any paid or unpaid time off.
- d) Should take and use all their scheduled breaks and time off entitlements for non-work-related activities.
- e) Will not face repercussions or be penalized for not communicating or continuing to work outside of their regularly scheduled hours of work.

4.2 Needs of the Library

4.2.1 Naturally there may, on occasions, be legitimate situations when it is necessary to contact employees outside of normally scheduled working hours, including but not limited to:

- a) Checking availability for shifts.
- b) To fill in at short notice for a sick employee.
- c) Where unforeseeable circumstances may arise.
- d) Where an emergency may arise.
- e) Where business and operational reasons require contact out of normally scheduled working hours.

4.3 Workload and Productivity

4.3.1 The Library understands that employees may want or need to work outside their normal scheduled hours of work to meet a time-sensitive deadline, to attend to an urgent matter, or due to unforeseen circumstances, however, employees should not regularly or frequently work outside their scheduled hours of work to complete or catch up on work.

4.3.2 Employees who cannot manage their workload during their regularly scheduled hours should meet with their direct supervisor to evaluate their current workload, priorities, and deadlines.

5.0 Communications

5.1 Employees may feel obligated to send or respond to messages when not working. The Library may on occasion send general communications to employees when they are not working, such as on an employee's day off or scheduled vacation, but will do their best to ensure that they are not sending communications that require an immediate response from employees. Employees are not expected to respond to any communication when not at work, apart from unforeseen circumstances, such as an emergency.

- 5.2 Employees must also respect others and avoid direct communication like sending emails, messages or calling other employees outside their regularly scheduled working hours, during breaks, or during an employee's time off, such as their regular day off or vacation time.
- 5.3 The Library understands that it may be necessary to send communications to a group of employees, such as an entire department, or forward important information to an employee who is not working. If employees do send communications to others who are not at work, they should not expect a response until the other employee returns. If the matter is urgent or an emergency and requires an immediate response, employees must reach out to their supervisor.
- 5.4 Employees who do not reply to work-related communications outside of normal scheduled working hours will not face negative effects on their employment.

6.0 Breaks and Time Off

- 6.1 Breaks are provided in accordance with the *Employment Standards Act* and the Collective Agreement. They are intended to provide employees with time to recharge and enable them to resume their regular work productively. Employees should take any scheduled breaks during their shift. Employees should take time away from their work and refrain from responding or sending work related communications during break.
- 6.2 The Library understands the importance for employees to have personal time off. Employees are encouraged to use their accrued paid vacation time, in full, every year for rest, relaxation, and personal pursuits.

7.0 Mental Health Supports

- 7.1 The Library recognizes that the workplace plays a significant role in managing and supporting mental health and understands that deterioration of mental health and wellness can be triggered by excess pressures at work or at home, and result in lowered work performance and harm one's physical and mental condition.
- 7.2 The Library supports the mental health of employees by:
- a) Attempting to minimize work-related sources of stress.
 - b) Addressing internal factors that contribute to burnout.
 - c) Promoting work-life balance.
 - d) Helping employees recognize the signs and symptoms of mental health issues.
 - e) Treat mental health with the same level of importance as physical health and safety.
 - f) Provide employees with the assistance and access to resources they need to support their mental health (i.e., employee assistance programs, etc.).

8.0 Review of Policy

8.1 This policy should be reviewed by the Board once per term.

9.0 Retention

9.1 The Library will retain copies of this policy on disconnecting from work for three years after the policy ceases to be in effect.

RELATED DOCUMENTS AND POLICIES

Working for Workers Act, 2021, S.O. 2021, c. 35

Employment Standards Act, 2000, c. 41

Collective Agreement

DOCUMENT REVISION RECORD

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